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CIA loses 'Mr. Inman'

By JOSEPH VOLZ

Washington (News Bureau)—Two years ago, Adm. Bobby R. Inman, the head of the National Security Agency, passed the White House and went straight to Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti after learning that Billy Carter was about to receive \$200,000 from the Libyans.

Last Wednesday, Inman said he was quitting his current job as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and it appeared that his concern over CIA plans for domestic spying was one of the reasons.

Did either move by Inman, known as "Mr. Integrity," suggest an improvement in the way the government is run. Probably not.

Inman's run around CIA Director Stansfield Turner in the Billy Carter case was futile. Civiletti sat on the information, and did not inform Justice Department officials investigating whether Carter had violated the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

THERE IS NO SIGN Inman's insistence that the CIA stay out of domestic spying will be heeded by President Reagan or by CIA Director William J. Casey. Reagan has signed an executive order allowing the CIA to collect "significant" intelligence information from Americans at home.

From the beginning of the CIA after World War II, policymakers worried that the agency might become one of secret police spying on Americans. Inman said during last year's debate over formulation of a new agency policy, "These rules are to protect U.S.

citizens, not anyone else, and I believe that we need to continue to protect them."

It now seems clear the agency will expand its counterintelligence operations in the United States. The counterintelligence unit in the 1950s and 1960s was headed by James J. Angleton, who was forced out in the mid-1970s in a power struggle with CIA Director William Colby. The counterintelligence section, responsible for insuring the agency is not infiltrated by Soviet agents, was cut back.



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—Adm. Bobby R. Inman
(During debate over new agency policy.)

Inman's departure may have even deeper significance for the CIA. He was a professional devoted to providing and assessing information without political bias. He did not tailor the intelligence he received for the President or any of the members of the National Security Council.

THE CIA ALSO IS said to be cranking up its covert operations branch again, after a period of quiet during the Ford and Carter administrations. Turner was no fan of covert operations and forced hundreds of spooks into retirement in 1977 and 1978.

In a pointed warning to the administration last Friday, Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said that Inman's successor at the CIA "needs to be" someone who has the complete confidence of Congress.

"The President needs to have his man in this situation and, in a very real sense, we on the Senate committee have looked to Inman—he's been our man," Lugar said. The leadership of Casey and Inman at the CIA insured "a system of checks and balances" important in the wake of disclosure of CIA misdeeds in the mid-1970s, Lugar said.

"That team is being broken up and it is going to take some time to put

A GOOD MANY CIA operations quickly become too big to hide. The secret war in Laos in the 1960s didn't stay secret for long. The United States might as well have sent the 82d Airborne in to help the CIA-financed tribesmen fight Communist guerrillas.

The CIA has improved its ability to conduct covert operations since then by getting Congress to abolish the law that forced the agency to inform eight separate legislative committees when it began an operation. Now only the Senate and House panels need to know—and in the case of the more influential Senate Intelligence Committee, it's almost like telling a member of the family. The new staff director of the panel is a former CIA operations officer in the Far East.

Whether the increase in CIA activity that the Reagan administration envisions will improve U.S. intelligence is not clear. That will depend on the professionals handling spy networks abroad, analyzing data, both secret and public, and the technocrats putting up spy satellites. If they do their jobs the way Inman envisioned, we may never know whether they succeeded or failed.